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PP RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHFN #0424 1971438
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 161438Z JUL 07
FM AMEMBASSY FREETOWN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1202
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHMT/AMCONSUL MONTREAL 0003
RHEFHLC/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHDC
RHMFIUU/TSA HQ WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS FREETOWN 000424

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/W, IO/T, EB/TRA
AMCONSUL MONTREAL FOR US MISSION TO ICAO
FAA NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS WASHINGTON DC FOR JIM FILIPPATOS
AND DI REIMOLD
TSA HEADQUARTERS WASHINGTON DC FOR JILLENE MACCREERY

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL EAIR ECON ETRD SL

SUBJECT: SIERRA LEONE: ICAO ASSEMBLY DEMARCHE DELIVERED

REF: A) STATE 77572 B) STATE 83246 C) FREETOWN 355

¶1. On July 2, PolOff met with Mohamed Bangura, Acting Director for the Sierra Leone Civil Aviation Authority, to deliver Reftels A and B demarches soliciting support for USG positions at the September ICAO General Assembly in Montreal. Bangura said he would take the points under consideration and share with the appropriate officials in his office and the Ministry of Transportation and Communications.

¶2. The Ministry of Transportation and Communications and the Civil Aviation Authority recently underwent a personnel shakeup following the June 15 arrests of the Minister and the Permanent Secretary of Transportation and Communications, as well as the Director and the Deputy Director of Civil Aviation. The Minister of Transportation and Communications subsequently resigned from office on June 20. All four individuals were arrested as part of the ongoing investigation into the June 3 crash of a helicopter operated by Paramount Airlines that killed 23 people (Reftel C). It is alleged the four officials took bribes to reinstate Paramount Airlines' helicopter services following its January grounding after two near crashes. Bangura said the Government has hired an independent consultant to investigate the crash. All four officials have been released on bail. The Government has grounded all helicopter services indefinitely.

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